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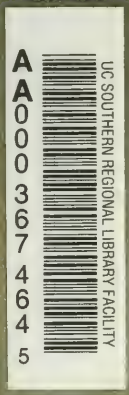

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VERSES

VERSES

BY

ELIZABETH WATERHOUSE

Poma nova & vetera, dilecte mi,
ſervavi tibi

Publiſhed by THOMAS HAWKINS
NEWBURY
1897

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SEA AND SHORE

WHEN we two paſſed the other eve
Through golden moonlight, hand in hand,
Along the ſandy margin ſet
For twilight ſpace 'twixt ſea & land,

The poſſible delight of life
Unmeaſured as the broad bright ſea,
And bounded as the ſand we trod
Its narrow turmoil ſeemed to me;

But when thy ſmile had paſſed away,
Nor in thy hand mine reſted more,
Life's boundleſs trouble ſeemed the wave,
Its narrow bliſs the bounded ſhore.

OLD LEAVES.

CRISP-whiſpering fly on the warm weſt wind's wing
With ſhivering ſigh, the ſaddeſt voice of Spring,
The few late leaves from laſt year lingering.

Fooliſhly faithful in wild wintry nights,
When ſudden ſtorms blew out the ſtarry lights
And the cold flakes came up in feathery flights.

Fooliſhly faithful, all their beauty gone,
All their young wooing ſoftneſs changed & wan,
With nothing left for love to linger on.

Fooliſhly fond, till one warm hour revealed
Where the young leaf-buds bluſhing lay concealed,
And one ſwift ſting the year-long claſp unſealed.

"Old leaves, old loves"—ſo ſome one ſeems to ſay
About my window this warm, wiſtful day
Above the violets—is it I or they?

DISTANCES.

SOMETIMES there ſeems to ſhine
On diſtant hill-tops clear
A future, thine and mine
Made one, my only dear.

But, dear, the Shepherds ſay
When all the uplands ſhine
Diſtinct, though far away,
Storms follow ſwift the ſign.

So, when there ſeems to ſhine
That future fair & clear,
For thy ſake & for mine
I weep—my only dear.

INCENSE.

OUTSIDE the Church's weſtern door I lingered by the way,
I heard no ſound of Sanctus bell, the chant had died away,
And round the porch the Acolytes were merry in their play,
Yet knew I by the incenſ'd air
Here had been the voice of prayer.

So, dereſt Lord, be all my life breathed round about by Thee,
When at Thy feet a little while I have knelt bleſſedly,

That thoſe who meet me by the way may rather feel
than ſee
" If God be prayed to anywhere
This ſoul hath been in prayer."

THREE PARABLES.

I.

I WAS not resolute in heart and will
To rise up suddenly & seek Thy Face,
Leaving the swine-husks in the desert place,
And crying, "I have sinned, receive me still!"

II.

I could not even at the Shepherd's voice
Startle & thrill, with yearnings for the fold,
Till He should take me in His blessed hold,
And lay me on His shoulder and rejoice.

III.

But lying silent, will-less in the dark,
A little piece of silver, lost from Thee,
I only knew Thy Hands were seeking me
And that I bore through all Thy heavenly mark.

AN ECLIPSE.

DARK world, ſad heart in ſilent ſympathy!
What matters it if both are in the ſhade?
The ſtars will ſteal out ſoon
And with the wide white moon,
Who walks the endleſs ether unafraid,
Will tread together gladly up the ſky
And not be any whit the dimmer made.

Dim heart & world! ſad world & ſadder heart,
What matters it if both are dark to-night?
If down thy trouble deep
No gleam of comfort creep,
If ſin or ſorrow ſhut thee from the light?
God's happy ones, though thou doſt mourn apart,
Will not be any whit leſs glad & white.

So ſaid I to the midnight & my ſoul,
Soothing myſelf with bitter hermit-hood,
When up the opal Eaſt,
Not white-robed for a feaſt,
But ſhrunk & ſcarred & ſtained as if with blood,
Shyly along a darkened path ſhe ſtole,
The maiden Moon above the elmen wood.

Darkened with what? No little veil of dew,
No cloud-lamb paſturing in fields of air
Flecks with a paſſing ſhade
The pathway of the maid,
Who elſe, to-night, were perfect-orbed & fair;
But the world's ſhadow, like an arrow true,
Hath ſtruck her with a ſtrange & new deſpair.

O Shadow of my heart, the heavenly ſtairs
Grow dim where thou art caſt perhaps to-night;
The ſoul thou loveſt beſt
May miſs ſome footing bleſt
On the great Ladder of the Infinite.
Ah me! how often & how unawares
We come between God's creatures & His light!

EASTER EVE.

I WAS weeping just before moonset,
Set of the Easter moon,
Though I knew that the morning of mornings
Would thrill & awaken soon.

I was weeping just before moonset,
At the hour of the waking of birds,
When two of God's angels spoke to me
In sweet compassionate words:

"Woman, why art thou weeping?"
And I answered, nothing afraid,
"Because they have taken away my Lord,
And I know not where He is laid.

"They have taken Him from the valleys,
Where I loved to follow His feet,
Seeing their print in the tender graſs
And finding His lilies ſweet.

"They have taken Him from my garden,
Where I uſed to walk & ſay,
'The Lord hath been down to my garden
And made a flower to-day.'

"They have taken Him from the mountains
And tops of the happy hills,
Where He uſed to drop the dew down
To pleniſh the pleaſant rills.

"They have taken Him from His cloud-land,
From thunder & thunder-ſhower,
From the rain He ſent for the ſpringing graſs
And ſhine for the harveſt hour.

"For all things are ſet and ordered
And parts of a great machine,
In which the hand of the Maker
Would tremble to intervene.

"And He could not ſave one petal
From a deſtined drop of rain,
Without unbuilding His univerſe
And building it up again.

"So now I can pray no longer
The prayers that once I prayed,
For they have taken away my Lord,
And I know not where He is laid."

Thus weeping juſt before moonſet,
In the hour of the waking of birds,
I was 'ware of Another who ſpoke to me
In ſweet compaſſionate words:

"Woman, why art thou weeping?"
And I ſpoke, not lifting my eyes,
"If thou have taken away my Lord,
O tell me where He lies."

But into His voice as He anſwered
Came a muſic all Divine—
One word, one name, He uttered,
The word, the name, was mine.

Then I knew it could not be another,
But my Lord with voice ſo ſweet,
I knew it all in a moment
And I ſtrove to claſp His feet.

I knew, for that one word told me
That they could not bear away
My Chriſt, my King, my Maſter,
From the place where once He lay.

'Tis He, who would bid me seek Him
Not painfully here & there,
But standing close beside me,
Always & everywhere.

Always—O Christ the Risen!
The moongleam fadeth fleet,
But the flush of Thine Easter Sunrise
Finds one more soul at Thy feet.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT.

IF I had lived in Bethlehem
And known where Jesus lay
Within the wooden manger
On a little bed of hay,
The new-born baby Jesus,
That earliest Christmas day,

How gladly had I taken,
With earliest dawning light,
The little pillow from my bed
And sheets of snowy white.

And through the streets of Bethlehem
I quickly should have run,

And ſtood before that ſtable-door
At riſing of the Sun.

And knocking ſoftly at the door
With earneſt voice ſhould ſay,
"Wake up, wake up, good Joſeph,
This happy Chriſtmas Day,
And let me in to ſee the babe
That's cradled on the hay."

I ſhould have ſaid, "O Mary bleſt,
Behold I quickly bring
A pillow & two little ſheets
To make a ſoft bedding
For the new-born baby Jeſus,
Who is my Lord & King."

I think good Joſeph quickly
Would have let me through the door,
And there among the ſheep & cows
I ſhould have knelt before

That holy, fairest baby
That ever mother bore.

I should have said upon my knees,
"The finest I can bring
Is all too coarse to make a bed
For Thee, my Lord & King,
Yet wilt Thou take, for Love's own sake,
Love's poorest offering."

Such words a little child said
Upon his mother's knee
One happy Christmas morning,
But nothing answered she.

She looked out still & sadly
Across the winter snow,
She watched the pale blue shadows
Of the bare trees come & go
As the North wind made the branches
Rock softly to & fro.

She thought how Christ the Saviour,
Still waiting day by day,
Is still as poorly tended
As when a bed of hay
Made all the soft enfolding
In the manger where He lay.

Pure thoughts & holy longings
Like linen fair & white,
And hearts of softest tenderness
Like downy pillow light,
With these we still should meet Him
At each day's dawning bright.

Yet still our Lord is waiting
At many a close-barred door—
For pure & holy worship,
For tending of His poor,
For all the gentle ministry
Of Love from Love's own store.

She thought how ſurely, ſurely
To each one comes the day,
When we are bid to waken
And riſe & put away
Some eaſe or ſweetneſs for His ſake,
Who came on Chriſtmas Day.

But ſhe only ſaid, "My darling,
There ſtill is work to do
For the bleſſed baby Jeſus
Who lived, a child for you.
But come, the bells are ringing
And we muſt praiſe Him too."

TO MY APRIL CHILD.

BABY, my Baby, thus I croon to thee,
Thou dearest blossom of the April tide;
Speak with me soul to soul a little while,
For I am tired & the world is wide.

Speak soul to soul, *thou hast no words as yet*
To wrap thy heart up in & hide it so.
Ah me! with every lesson that we learn,
How much that is more blessed we forego.

A little while, *the world runs faster now*
Than when a mother all day long might sit
Spinning at once fair dreams & snowy threads
Beside her baby's cradle, rocking it.

And I am tired—*tired of myſelf:*
Thou only with thoſe love-taught eyes of thine
Beholdeſt through this brittle, cloudy glaſs
A type which is eternal and divine.

The world is wide, *ſo wide & yet ſo full*
Of hearts that do not care for thee or me.
Ah well! juſt lay thy cheek there on my breaſt
And we can ſay, "God help them, let them be."

So while the hot noon reſts upon the world,
Thou dereſt bloſſom of the April tide,
Speak ſoul to ſoul a little while with me,
For I am tired & the world is wide.

THE CHOICE OF PARIS.

(*Written at the beginning of the Siege of Paris*, 1870.)

O PARIS! thou too hadſt thy threefold choice,
As had that other upon Ida's height—
Stern Strength, ſelf ruling Wiſdom, ſoft Delight,
But Aphrodite's was the ſweeteſt voice.

So hover Strength & Wiſdom ſcorned of thee
Above the ſtandard of thy fateful foe,
Whoſe blue battalions in unceaſing flow
Are ſurging round thee like an angry ſea.

Too late thou riſeſt to put ſwiftly on
Thy ruſting armour at the trumpet's call,
There ſhines already on thy leaguered wall
A doomful glare, like flames of Ilion.

THE PEACE. 1871.

"I HAVE made peace, thank God." O Emperor King,
At this thy word the nations lift their eyes,
Looking for One they wot of to arise
White-robed, on happy wing.

What do they see? There crouches at thy heel
A sullen Thing with vengeance in her face,
Writhing & wroth, but fettered to her place
By bonds of German steel.

As one should tell us in the dim thick night—
"Behold the dawn!" and we looked forth to see
The whole wide East grow golden silently
With joy of coming light,

And ſaw inſtead a line of cloudy flame
And lightning flaſhes leaping ſwift therethrough,
And heard the muffled thunder-pulſe & knew
The ſtorm, not morning, came.

So is it when each wiry nerve to-day
Of eager Europe thrills with that ſweet word,
Sweet yet ſo falſe, ſoon as its ſound is heard
Its promiſe dies away.

Thy God of Battles, whom we do not know,
Thank for the Rhinelands & the golden fleece,
But not for ſuch poor truce the Chriſt of Peace—
His Peace He gives not ſo.

LOVE AND TIME.

WAITING for Love the other morn
Beſide my ſunny orchard wall,
Acroſs the dial, moſſed and worn,
I watched the early ſhadow fall.
"Ah me!" I ſighed, "ſo glides the day,
So Love, who comes, will paſs away."

Juſt then below me in the dew
Where ſlants the orchard valley deep,
Time's buſy ſcythe was whiſtling through
The after-graſs in ſteady ſweep.
"Ah me!" I cried, "were Time away
Love when he comes would always ſtay."

" Oh mower of my late delight!
Oh robber of the golden hours!
I'll cover up from Love's dear ſight
Thy dial-ſhade with ſcented flowers,
And, heeding not the fleeting day,
Love in my garden ſtill ſhall ſtay."

Then from the Southern border, full
Of all ſweet roſes autumn blown,
A cluſter was I ſwift to cull
And heap them on the dial ſtone:
The ſhadow crept to where they lay
As Love came down the orchard way.

All in the drowſy afternoon
Love talked with me through languid hours,
And ſlow, as in a weary ſwoon,
Time's ſhade crept on beneath the flowers,
And few the words that Love did ſay
And paſſing ſad he ſeemed alway.

Weary of all things Love me ſeemed,
He laid him in the ſcented graſs
And murmured ſtill as if he dreamed
Of time to come & time that was,
For Love doth love to build, they ſay,
To-morrow out of yeſterday.

But Time was leaning on his ſcythe
And gazed upon me ſtanding near,
"Are then the hours of Love more blithe
When my ſwift ſweep they cannot hear?
The ſhade had marked a ſweeter day,
Poor heart, were all thy flowers away!"

And then he called the little breeze
With which he makes the ripe fruit fall,
And bade it lift my red roſes
And heap them by the orchard wall,
And cried, "O Love! awake! away!
Behold how ſwiftly falls the day."

And Love arose with gayer cheer
And, looking on the low-cast shaae,
He said, "Too long I linger here,"
And strode, swift stepping down the glade.
I did not seek to say him nay—
For weary Love is best away.

CLEMATIS.

O FAIR tree bending over
The hedgerow where I rise,
Know you the lowly lover
Who looks with faithful eyes
Up to your boughs that cover
My space of summer skies?

My wistful tendrils winding
Seek always up to you,
Beyond you broadens blinding
The whole of Heaven's blue—
Enough shines for my finding
Your leafy roofing through.

Thus day by day repeating
My ſimple round of care,
I'm day by day completing
One upward winding ſtair—
My growth is my entreating,
I live my faithful prayer.

Heaven & the high ſtars teach you
Secrets by me unguеſſed,
I for no grace beſeech you
To ſtir your myſtic reſt,
For though I may not reach you
To ſeek you is my beſt.

VILLARS SUR OLLON.

WINDS on this mountain meadow
Bear whiſpers to and fro
Of cool blue clefts of ſhadow
Under the ſhelves of ſnow,
And of vineyard ſteeps
Where the lizard ſleeps
In warm lands below,
And their ſongs ſeem
Like a loſt dream
I dreamt a life ago.

And whether the cryſtal coolneſs
They tell of on the height,
Or Autumn's fecund fullneſs
In lowlands of delight,

Be the ſweeteſt thing
The breezes ſing,
Heart, thou canſt not ſay;
For their ſongs ſeem
Like a loſt dream
I dreamt a world away.

IN ENNA.

PERSEPHONE, around whose feet
The meadow grasses cling & throng,
Was there no other flower so sweet
As this of poet's song
That led thee from thy mother's hand
The laughing plains along?

So meet it seemed for maiden wreath.
How couldst thou guess? thou didst not see
That long as life & strong as death
Its slender root would be,
And when thy fingers gathered it
Love's arms would gather thee.

THE SONG OF THE COLOURS.

(For an Air of Mozart.)

GOLD of the king-cup, gold of the ſheaves,
Gold of the light through lattice of leaves;
Blue of the mountain, blue of the ſea,
Blue of the bright air, ſing to me.
Life is a garden, love-ſhielded from ſadneſs,
Roſe-walls around it, by warm winds o'er-blown.
Beryl of barley-waves in June,
Opal of moonriſe, O ſing ſoon
A ſong of the garden of gladneſs.
O my own!

Brown of the beech that mourns alone,
Brown of the larch by late winds ſtrown,

Brown of the bracken frayed & toſt,
Sing to me ſadly, "Love is loſt."
Life is a moorland where wild winds awaken,
Locked from Love's garden my heart makes her moan.
Black of the moonſet, black of the cloud,
Black of the midnight, ſing, ſing loud
The ſong of a ſoul forſaken.
O my own!

White of the foam-fleck, white of the ſnow,
White of the furnace all aglow,
White of the lily, white of the dove,
Sing of a whole world built of Love.
Life is a path that grows greener for wending,
Lovers may fail us, Love laſteth alone.
Red of the ſunſet, red of the roſe,
Sing me the ſong that no man knows,
The Song of a Love never ending.
O my own!

SLEEP AT DAWN.

DOWN the long dark I lie awake,
Beloved, for thy tender ſake
Forecaſting leſt ſome chance of ill
Thy happy dream ſhould unfulfil;
When on the Southern upland lies
The Scorpion with his ſhining eyes,
And through the many-neſted trees
The ſtars ſhine thick as hiving bees,
For thee my ſoul hath ſtrife of prayer,
With folded hands, awake, aware,
Till thy dawn comes, darling.

But when from off the Southern miſt
The ſhining Scorpion hath upriſt,
When white inflowings of the day

Have waſht from Heaven the milky way,
When from the beds of waking ſtreams
Paſs in pale troops their fading dreams,
When each glad bird that leaves his neſt
Shrills a "Venite" to the reſt,
When winds of morning bathe my brow,
I ſleep, thou wilt not need me now,
When thy dawn comes, darling.

OUT OF THE PAST.

With a book of old Rhymes. To My Child.

I HAVE wandered far away
For a gift to thee,
Into an old dead day
Where phantoms be,
Into an iſland ſet
In a wide, ſad ſea,
Whoſe ſhores the long waves fret
Unceaſingly.

And under a waning moon
When the dawn delayed,
Late for thee, love, & ſoon
In that land I ſtrayed;

Herbs of the ſhifting ſand
That the ſalt winds fade,
Bound with Love for a band
This Garland made.

Sere & ſcentleſs & hoar
Are the flowers of my wreath,
Frayed with the ſcud of the ſhore
And the ſharp ſtorm's teeth,
But the riband of Love hath not known
The harſh brine's breath—
It is brighter than Life, my own,
And ſtronger than Death.

POLURRIAN.

My ear is weary of the Weſt Sea's roar
Where all night long its white teeth tear the ſhore,
Waking me ſhrilly from a dream of fear
That ſome huge hideous beaſt is ravening near.

My eyes are tired of the ſteep cliff's ſide
And gray-green headlands hollowed of the tide,
And even of the ſwift, ſun-ſmitten ſpray
And Michael's fairy Mount acroſs the bay.

'Tis that the Hunter Care has found me here,
Whither I fled for ſhelter from his ſpear,
And his *wild cry & white ſtare ſeem to me*
The thunder & the flaſhing of the ſea.

THE WHEELWRIGHT.

MY home is on a pleasant hill
Where pine & cedar sigh,
Where strong winds bend the oaks at will
And howl & hurry by;
And one red tower drinks its fill
Out of the sunset sky.

Among the oaks in acorn days
The shining rooks carouse,
The squirrel chuckles as he plays
And skims the topmost boughs,
While on the slope the heifers graze
And furtive rabbits browse.

Beneath the hill, where curls the ſmoke,
A wheelwright has his ſhed,
I hear his heavy hammer-ſtroke
From dawn till weſtern red,
And carts he builds for living folk
And coffins for the dead.

Once, as I paſſed, the wheelwright good
Raiſed from a ſmouldering fire
To fling about a wheel of wood
A red-hot rounded tire,
While near him wife & children ſtood
To help him or admire.

And when my pulſes gaily glide,
Hearing his blows, I ſay,
" He builds a curvèd wagon wide
For bringing home the hay,
Where alſo laughing girls ſhall ride
Abroad on holiday."

But when the tides of life are low
And peſtilence is bred,
When under village roofs I know
That ſick folk lie a-bed,
I ſay, " *He makes a coffin ſo*
For one who'll ſoon be dead."

A NEW WORLD.

LO, with what care Columbus wrought
To find fair isles beyond the sea—
But now a new world all unsought
Across the cowslips comes to me.

A new Atlantis floats to me
Frothed with the surf of April woods,
And shrinking on the shore I see
The children of their solitudes.

Shy thoughts & dusky dreams of dreams:
"Come near, come near, & speak," I cry,
"Bring water from your winding streams,
Bring fruits & viands lest I die."

In vain.—Before their gifts I hold,
Great ſeas of dark green Summer riſe;
And bear me on their manifold
Warm waves away to alien ſkies.

Another Spring? 'tis idly ſaid;
Mine are not many yet to come,
But where the April world is made
I hope one day to build my home.

To M.

I.

IN WINTER.

IN windy winter, O my love, my love,
I ſeek the ſpot where moſt I think of thee,
When no blue breaks the windy murk above,
And no bird ſings upon the ſtraining tree.

For then thy grave, where now no petals fall,
The ſodden churchyard, & the ſtormy tide,
Yea, all that is, ſeems but a great gray wall
With ſhining ſummer on the other ſide.

Yes, ſhining ſummer in a perfect place,
And thou, my beautiful, art ſtanding there—
I cannot ſee the ſplendour of thy face,
Nor gueſs the new-lit glory of thy hair;

But one day, ſurely, dear, a little door
In this gray wall will open, thou wilt come
And I ſhall look upon thy ſmile once more,
And thou wilt take my hand & lead me home.

II.

IN SUMMER.

LIGHT that I love the beſt!
Dear, thy ſpirit hath gueſſed
That it is not the ſtrong ſwift ſplendour,
Banner of Day's ſurrender
On turret clouds of the Weſt;

Nor the wide, white whiſper, "Soon
Comes our Lady the Moon!"
Which when the ſad ſtars hearken
They cower & quail & darken
Low at her ſilver ſhoon.

Not the keen leaping line,
Topaz or opaline,

Or ſudden ſapphire, brightening
The world's edge with low lightening
When ſtars care not to ſhine.

But the lingering light that lies
In the North when a long day dies,
Binding with pearlen thread
Sorrow for one day dead,
To hope for the day that ſhall riſe.

"Behold, behold," it would ſay,
"Thy Joy hath paſſed this way
Over the round world's rim;
Lean thou & look for him,
He comes with dawn of day."

"Behold, behold," it ſaith,
"Spirit that ſorroweth,
The ſmile of the Well-Beloved,
But for a ſpace removed
Over the edge of death."

No dim & wandering queſt,
No far hope faintly gueſſed,
But a night-long tendereſt token,
A word that is almoſt ſpoken,
This light that I love the beſt.

THE YOUNGEST CHILD.

WHEN thou art old, go forth ſome azure day,
Leaving thy children at their grave employ,
Thy grandchildren at play,
And, ſeeking with ſlow feet
Some quiet woodland ſeat,
Forget all cares that could thy peace annoy,
And take thy joy
This way.

Be ſure no keen airs through the branches come,
Nor beam too ſcorching pierce them overhead,
And let the wild bees hum,
The ſquirrels laughing cry,
And flap of wings on high

Be all the ſounds that to thy ear are ſped,
All others fled
Or dumb.

There fold by fold unwrap the garb of years
In which it is thy wont to go
Diſguiſed among thy peers,
Diſrobe thee till thou win
Within, within, within
The little Child whoſe joy they cannot know,
Or, be it ſo,
Its tears.

A little Child, grieved by a roſe-thorn ſmart
And by a roſe, a bird, a toy beguiled
With fooliſh, childiſh heart.
There with that ſelf unchanged,
But all too long eſtranged,
For one ſhort hour of play be reconciled
And be the Child
Thou art.

Chiſwick Preſs:—Charles Whittingham & Co.
Tooks Court, Chancery Lane, London.

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